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What Do We Want C.I.A. to Do? What Are Limits on Its Activities?

(Members of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, including the editor of *The Chronicle*, have spent most of the past two weeks in Washington and New York, exposed to many sources of information, official and otherwise. No man ever feels certain in either his information or his interpretation, but an editor owes it to his readers to give his best judgment of the events which he has seen and heard. This is the second of a series of editorial judgments based on these experiences.)

The unhappy wreath marking the most embarrassed man in the United States rested uneasily on the bald, perspiring brow of Adlai Stevenson as he defended the United States in the United Nations after the debacle in Cuba.

Mr. Stevenson was sweating because he was not telling the whole truth as he knew it.

This is often a diplomat's fate. Somehow, the Russians do it with greater savoir-faire, because they make no pretense of truth-telling. Mr. Stevenson was sweating because he was trying to defend the whole body of the United States in Cuban affairs—one head and two arms. The head is the President's. One arm is the State Department. The other arm is the Central Intelligence Agency.

The President had carefully said no Americans would be involved in the invasion of Cuba by the patriots. The State Department had conducted frostily formal nonrelations with Castro and Cuba. When the elements favoring the overthrow of Castro welded themselves into a government in exile, the State Department meticulously said that the United States cannot recognize a government in exile.

But while the head and one arm were conducting themselves with moral probity, the Central Intelligence Agency was arranging the ill-fated Cuban revolution. Our CIA arm was in Cuba up to its armpit. Our left-hand was doing what the head and the other arm pretended we did not do.

CIA is the American spy system. We have gone to great lengths to pretend it does not exist. The CIA budget cannot be found in the federal budget, yet CIA pays 10,000 employees. The federal budget is so opulent that between

\$600 million and \$700 million can be hidden in its fatty folds.

The CIA reports in secrecy to a congressional committee which determines whether its financial requests are adequate, superfluous or niggardly. It is generally agreed that the agency is effective when it is secret, and that when it is in the headlines, it is in trouble.

It is in the headlines now. First, because it provided poor guidance for the President on Cuba. Second, because the Cuban operation raises a fresh question for Americans: What is the function of a spy system?

Despite denials by the CIA, it is our judgment that President Kennedy chose our Cuban course on information from the CIA, against a mild protest by Secretary of State Rusk who wanted more information. It is known that the President decided without a cabinet meeting, a National Security Council meeting, or consultation with his ambassador to the United Nations, Mr. Stevenson.

Where Mr. Eisenhower's administration was often slowed by staff work, Mr. Kennedy has indicated a pattern of one-man administration. Unless this episode changes him, the Cuban matter confirms this belief—and underlines the dangers of decisions made quickly, but without being thought through thoroughly.

Had the landings been successful, there would have been no discussion of the CIA; but failure raises not only the question of why the failure but also a broader one: What should Central Intelligence Agency do? Should it gather information only? Or should it engage in subversion abroad—such as we resist at home? Should it be the tool of the United States to win by revolution what we do not choose to win by war? Do we want our ambassador to the United Nations to be able to speak for the whole United States, government, honestly and frankly, without subterfuge, reservation or embarrassment? What are our morals in dealing with other nations? Do our spies look different to other nations—or look like the Communists' spies?

The amazing thing is that Americans have never debated what we wanted our government to do in this field. We did not debate it because this was secret government. Had the CIA information led us into a war with Russia over Cuba, could we say that we, the people, had made the decision? When are the functions and operations of the CIA limited by the checks and balances of a constitutional republic?

If nothing else, these questions underline the dangers of any secrecy in any government of the people. And, in the light of this danger, the administration appeals for "self-censorship" of newspapers, but the report that Atty. Gen. Robert Kennedy will succeed Allen Dulles as head of the CIA is most disturbing of all.